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THE LAST ROUND





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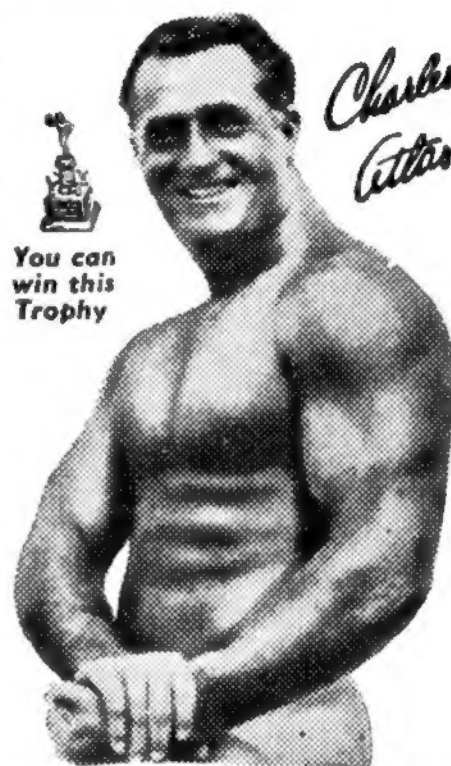
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.....

The **LAST ROUND**

THE BATTLEFIELDS OF EUROPE SAW MANY BRANDS OF COURAGE WHERE MAN WAS PITTED AGAINST MAN IN SAVAGE CLASHES OF ARMS. BUT EVEN THERE, SOME MEN FOUND THEIR VALOUR IN STRANGE WAYS . . .



Chapter 1. *Blood Fight*

ON A SULTRY NIGHT IN JUNE 1939, THE CROWD IN THE SPORTSPLATZ STADIUM WERE YELLING THEMSELVES HOARSE AS HANS SWARTZ, GERMAN HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION, SMASHED HIS OPPONENT TO THE DECK FOR THE SIXTH TIME.



JERRY BURCH, MANAGER OF THE BRITISH BOXER, MIKE CARROL, WATCHED IN HORROR AS HIS MAN WAS BEATEN ROUND THE RING



IN THOSE FINAL, LONG DRAWN OUT SECONDS BEFORE THE END OF THE ROUND, CARROL WAS HELPLESS, REELING BEFORE A TREMENDOUS ONSLAUGHT FROM THE GERMAN!



ONE SLEDGE-HAMMER PUNCH FELLED THE ENGLISHMAN, WHO HIT THE CANVAS AND LAY MOTIONLESS. A ROAR OF APPROVAL SWELLED FROM THE CROWD.



CARROL WAS CARRIED TO THE DRESSING-ROOM, STILL UNCONSCIOUS. BURCH TOOK ONE LOOK AT HIM AND SENT FOR THE DOCTOR



THE GERMAN DOCTOR GAVE CARROL A SWIFT EXAMINATION AND SPOKE ARROGANTLY TO BURCH . . .



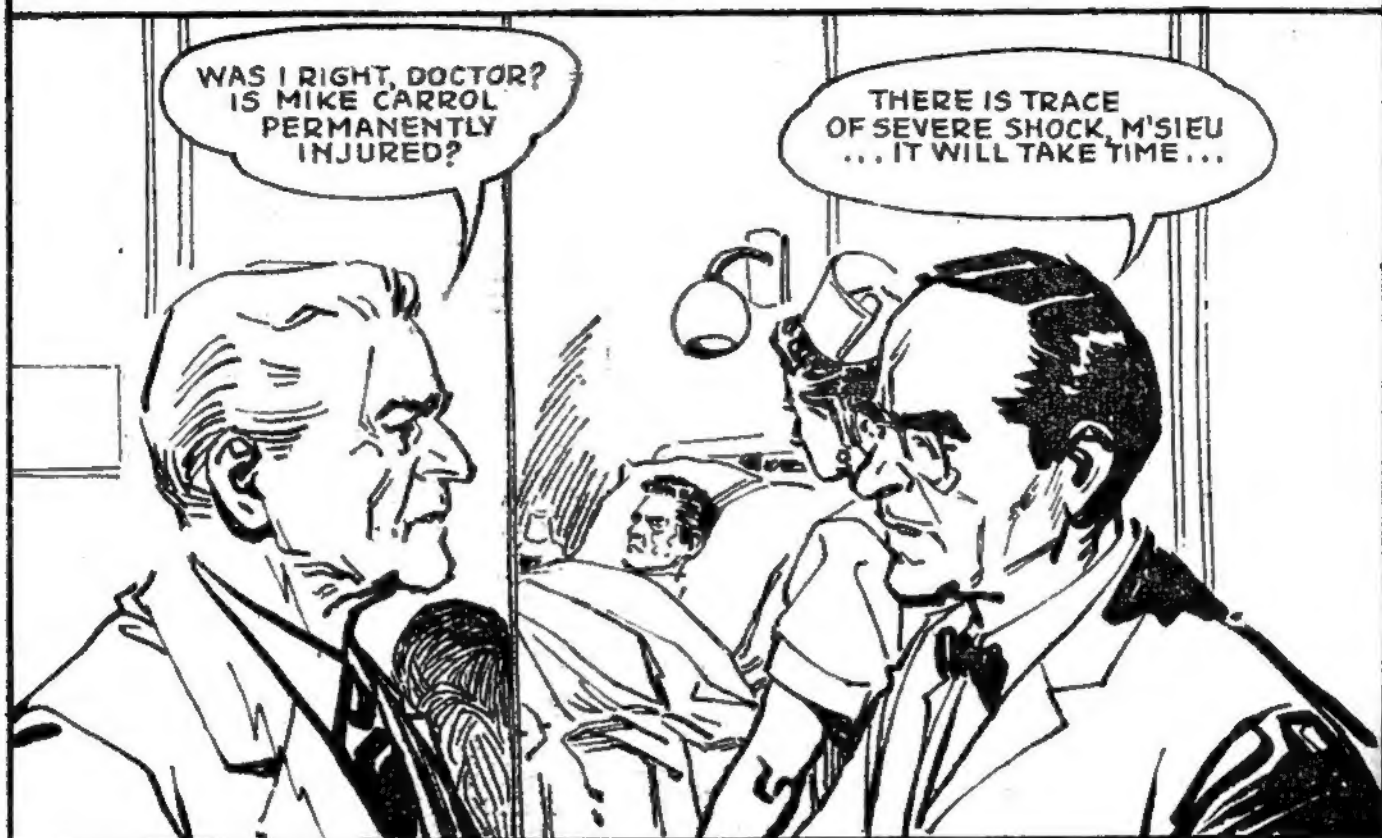
SOMEHOW BURCH MANAGED TO GET HIS MAN INTO A TAXI AND TO THE AIRPORT. THERE, THE NAZI CROWD HEAPED ABUSE AND INSULTS ON THE DAZED FIGHTER!



THE PLANE THAT BURCH AND CARROL TOOK WAS ONE OF THE LAST NORMAL SCHEDULED FLIGHTS TO LEAVE BERLIN. AT PARIS AIRPORT, REPORTERS MET THE PLANE



BEFORE THE NOON EDITIONS OF THE PARIS PAPERS WERE ON THE STREETS, BURCH HAD TAKEN MIKE CARROL TO A PARIS HOSPITAL



MIKE CARROL'S HOSPITALISATION MEANT A BIG EXPENDITURE OF TIME AND MONEY, THE TWO COMMODITIES OF WHICH JERRY BURCH WAS SO SHORT IN THOSE URGENT DAYS OF PRE-WAR TENSION



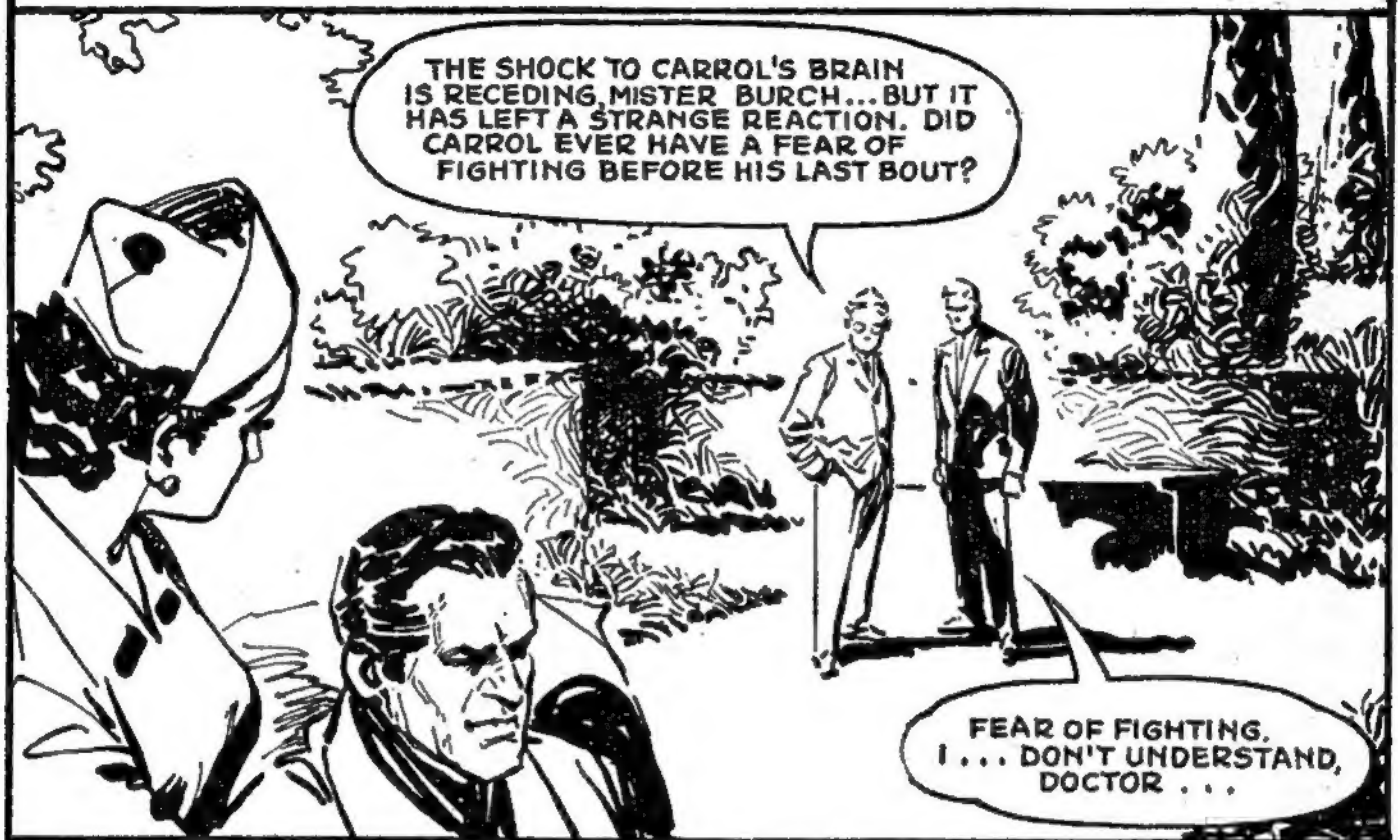
JERRY BURCH HAD SPENT A FORTUNE BUILDING UP MIKE CARROL FROM A PROMISING AMATEUR TO A PROFESSIONAL FIGHTER.



NOW, MORE THAN EVER BEFORE, BURCH FELT A DEEP RESPONSIBILITY FOR MIKE CARROL. RELUCTANTLY, HE REPORTED FOR ARMY DUTY WITH HIS OLD REGIMENT. . .



BURCH CALLED AT THE HOSPITAL AGAIN, THAT WEEKEND. THE NEWS WAS ENCOURAGING . . . EXCEPT FOR ONE OMINOUS QUESTION ASKED BY THE DOCTOR . . .



BURCH WAS A WORRIED MAN WHEN HE LEFT THE HOSPITAL

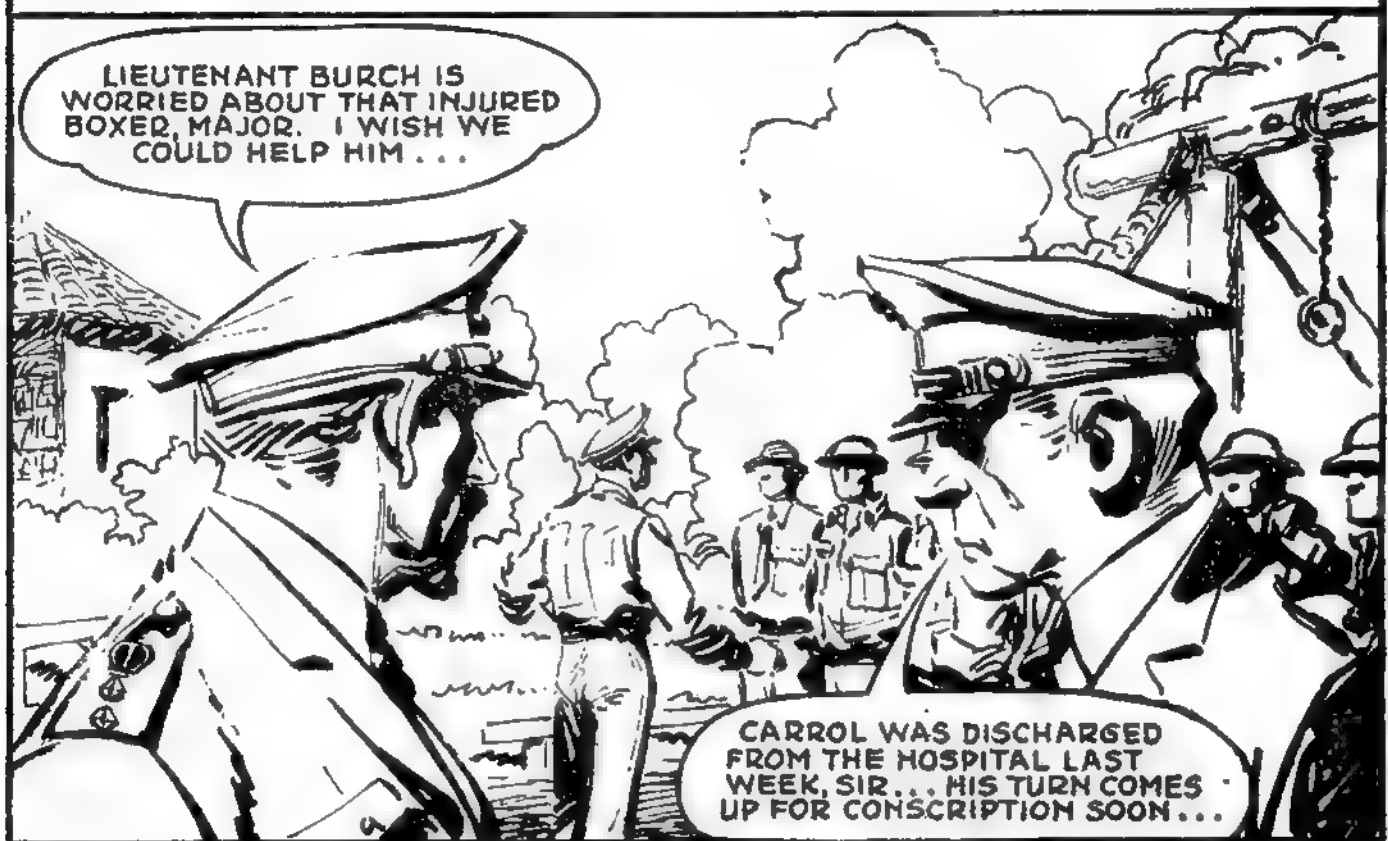
IT LOOKS AS IF
MIKE IS FINISHED
AS A FIGHTER . . .
BUT IT'S THE ONLY
TRADE HE KNOWS
. . . WHAT WILL HE
DO NOW?

THE EX-MANAGER COULD DELAY HIS RETURN TO THE ARMY NO LONGER. NEXT DAY, HE REPORTED FOR DUTY IN HIS OLD RANK OF LIEUTENANT.

TORMENTED BY A DEEP SENSE OF GUILT, BURCH CRACKED DOWN HARD ON HIS MEN, GAINING A REPUTATION AS A STRICT DISCIPLINARIAN

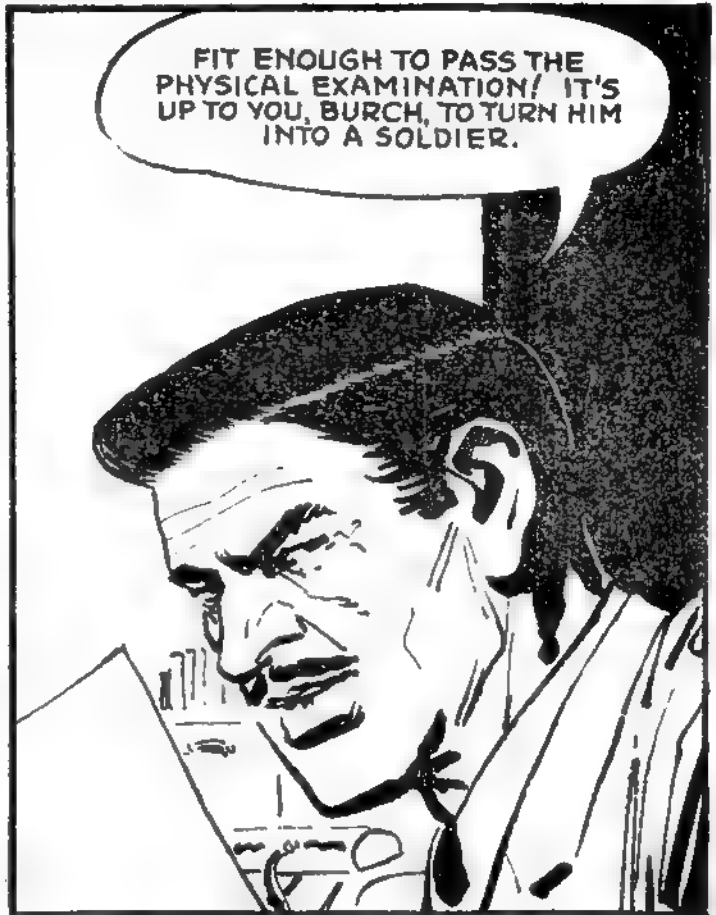
COR... THIS BLOKE BURCH
MUST LIKE DRILL, THE
WAY HE KEEPS US AT IT!

THE COLONEL NOTED THE CHANGE THAT HAD COME OVER JERRY BURCH SINCE THE FIGHT IN BERLIN



A FEW DAYS LATER, BURCH WAS CALLED INTO THE COLONEL'S OFFICE





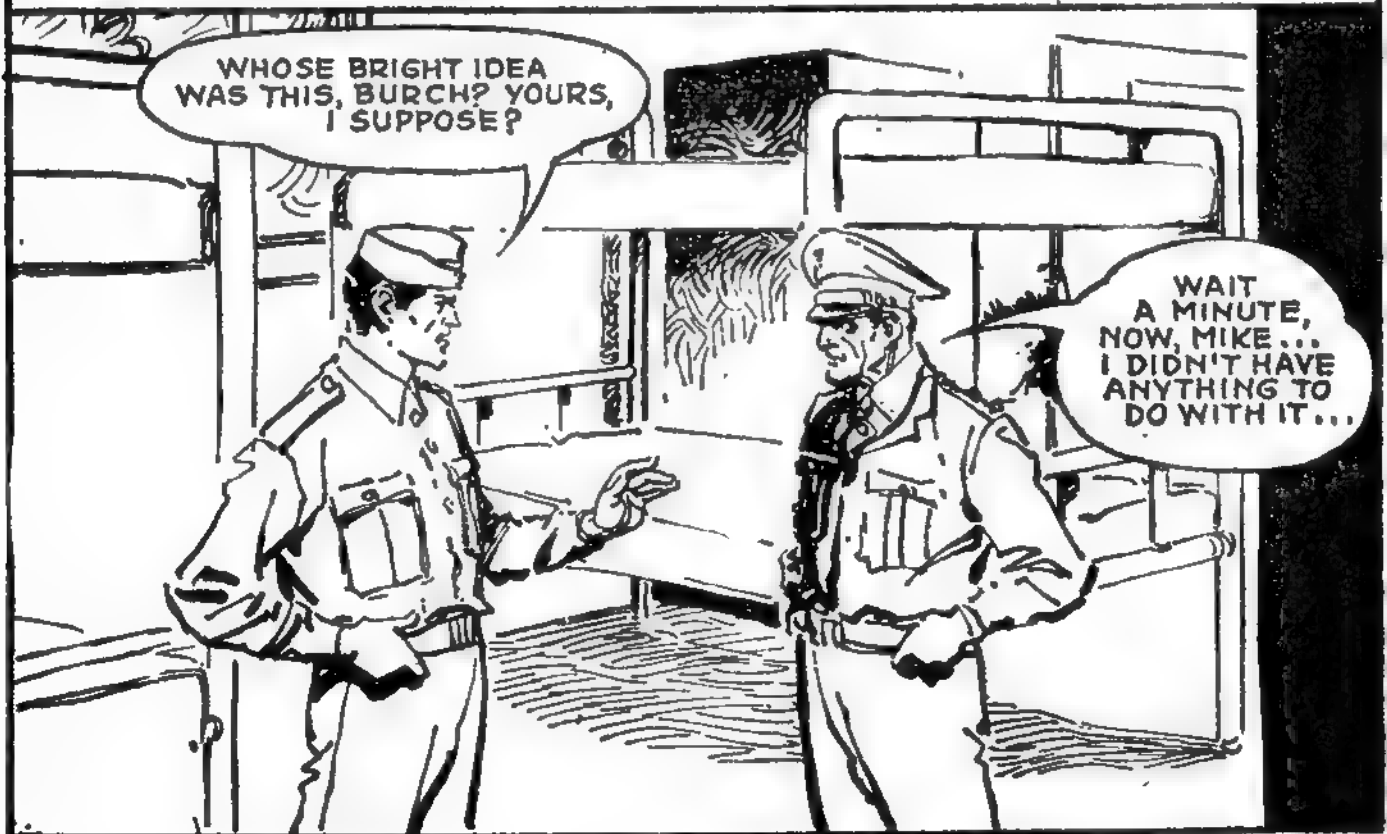
CONFUSED AND DOUBTFUL, BURCH LEFT THE COLONEL'S OFFICE. FOR HOURS HE SAT THUMBING THE PAGES OF MIKE CARROL'S SCRAPBOOK, DEEP IN THOUGHT . . .



AT LAST, MIKE CARROL RECEIVED HIS CALL-UP PAPERS AND REPORTED TO THE HEADQUARTERS OF BURCH'S REGIMENT



MIKE WAS PUT IN BURCH'S PLATOON. BUT THE FIRST TIME THE TWO OF THEM CAME FACE TO FACE, THE LIEUTENANT RECEIVED A SHOCK



CARROL'S VOICE WAS HARSH WITH PENT-UP FURY AS HE REPLIED . . .



Chapter 2. *Challenge of Arms*

CARROL WASTED NO TIME IN TRYING TO LIVE UP TO HIS BOAST. IN THE SPACE OF A FEW WEEKS HE BECAME NOTORIOUS AS THE MOST SLOVENLY SOLDIER IN THE CAMP.



BUT FACTORS MORE POWERFUL THAN DRILL AND PARADE GROUNDS WERE TO HAVE THEIR EFFECT ON THE DESTINY OF PRIVATE MIKE CARROL



AT THAT STAGE IN THE WAR, THE WESTERN DESERT WAS JUST WARMING UP AS A BATTLEGROUND. WHEN THE REGIMENT REACHED IT, IT HAD BECOME A COCKPIT OF FLAME AND FURY. . .



NOW PROMOTED TO CAPTAIN, BURCH SOON LED HIS CRACK COMPANY INTO ACTION. . .



BATTALION
COMMAND. WE
ARE UNDER
HEAVY FIRE...
REQUIRE
SUPPORT...

OUR FORWARD
PLATOONS ARE PINNED
DOWN, SIR. THERE'S NO
CHANCE OF RELIEVING
THEM TILL NIGHTFALL!

IT WAS THE HIGH POINT OF THE GERMAN ARMY'S TRIUMPHAL SWEEP ACROSS NORTH AFRICA. THE MIGHTY PANZERS GROUND OPPOSITION TO DUST BEFORE THEM!



IT WAS INTO THIS DEAFENING, DAZZLING MAELSTROM OF WAR THAT PRIVATE MIKE CARROL, EX-BOXER, WAS PITCHFORKED. SHAKING WITH FEAR, HE LAY PINNED TO EARTH BY A MURDEROUS GERMAN ARTILLERY BARRAGE



BEHIND THE BRILLIANT FLASHES AND DRIFTING SMOKE OF A CREEPING BARRAGE, CAME A CRACK UNIT OF THE AFRIKA KORPS



MIKE CARROL'S PLATOON FACED THE FIRST WAVE OF THE ENEMY ATTACK!



SUDDENLY A BLAZE OF LIGHTS SEEMED TO EXPLODE INSIDE MIKE'S HEAD AS A SHELL EXPLODED VIOLENTLY BESIDE HIM. HE FELL UNCONSCIOUS . . .



IT WAS SOME TIME BEFORE CARROL CAME TO AGAIN. HE FOUND HIMSELF AMIDST A SHAMBLES OF A WRECKED POSITION . . .



VAGUELY CARRIED ON THE WIND, SOUNDS OF BATTLE CAME FROM THE REAR. IN AN INSTINCTIVE REFLEX OF FEAR, CARROL BEGAN TO STAGGER AWAY FROM THE NOISE...



THE NIGHT FADED, AND DAWN BROKE. NOW THE LONE SOLDIER FOUND HIMSELF UP AGAINST A MORE DEADLY ENEMY THAN THE ONE, FROM WHOM HE HAD ESCAPED.



EXHAUSTED, THE RELUCTANT SOLDIER DROPPED THE EMPTY WATER BOTTLE AND SANK WEARILY TO THE SAND. . .



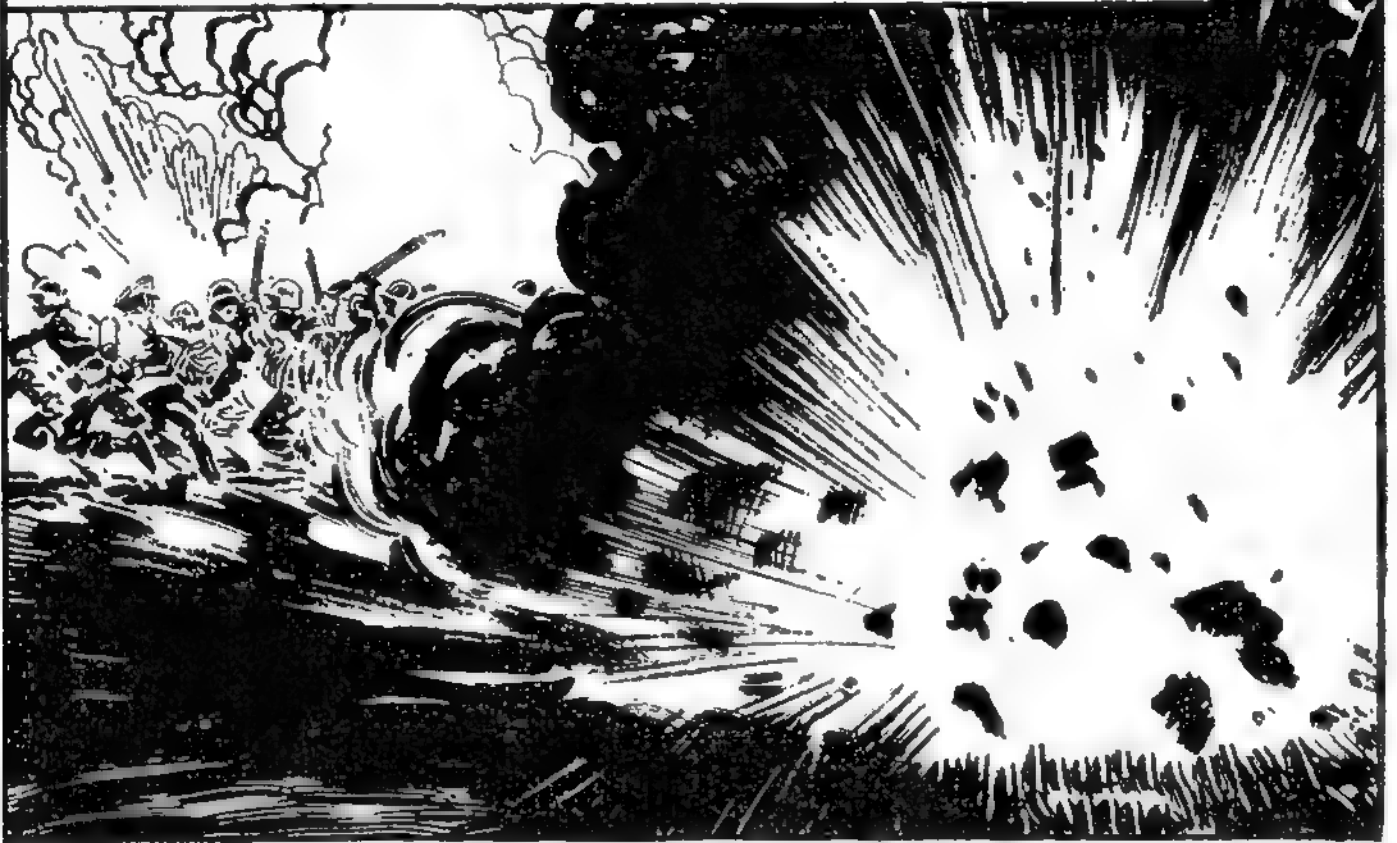
MEANWHILE, BACK AT COMMAND H.Q., CAPTAIN BURCH WAS STILL FIGHTING . . . AND THE DEADLY GERMAN ADVANCE HAD BEEN HALTED AT LAST. . .



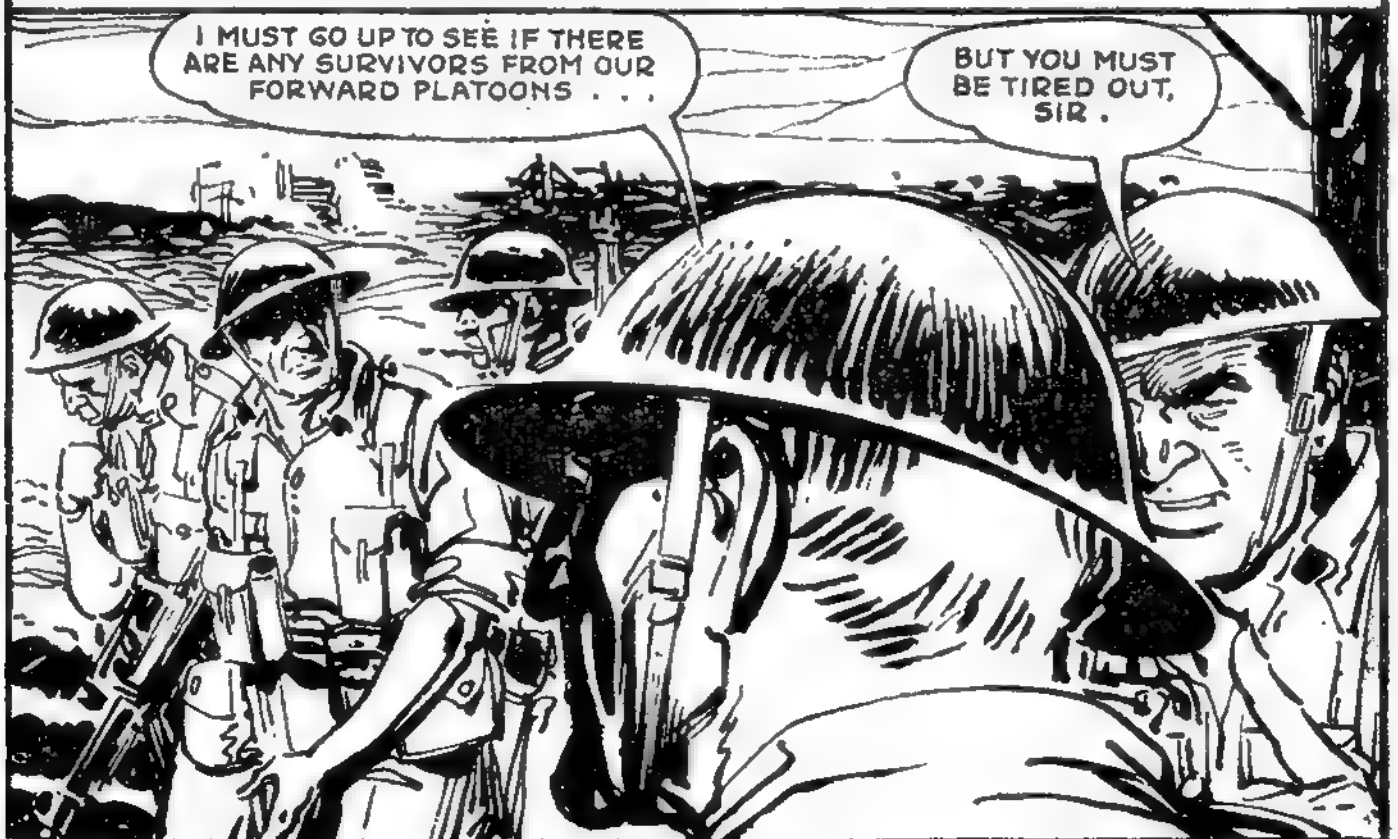
IT WAS TWO HOURS BEFORE REINFORCEMENTS MOVED IN, AND CAPTAIN BURCH WAS ABLE TO HAND OVER THE POSITION TO THE RELIEVING OFFICER . . .



THE BRITISH COUNTER BARRAGE SLAMMED INTO THE CRACK NAZI TROOPS, SMASHING THE LAST POCKETS OF RESISTANCE IN THE SECTOR!



AT LAST, HIS RESPONSIBILITIES HANDED OVER TO THE RELIEVING OFFICER, BURCH HAD A CHANCE TO THINK OF MIKE CARROL



I MUST GO UP TO SEE IF THERE ARE ANY SURVIVORS FROM OUR FORWARD PLATOONS . . .

BUT YOU MUST BE TIRED OUT, SIR .

BURCH WAVED OBJECTIONS ASIDE! HIS CONSCIENCE WAS TROUBLING HIM AGAIN. THIS WAS THE SECOND TIME HE HAD SENT MIKE CARROL TO FACE GRAVE DANGER . . .



THEY REACHED THE WEAPON PITS FORMERLY OCCUPIED BY THE PLATOON. THE SHATTERED RIFLES AND CHAOS OF BATTLE TOLD ITS OWN STORY . . .



SUDDENLY, THE LIEUTENANT SPOTTED SOME FOOTPRINTS IN THE SAND . . .



THE TRACKS LED WELL AWAY FROM THE SCENE OF CARNAGE . . .



JUST AS THE LIEUTENANT AND CAPTAIN BURCH WERE HEADING FOR THE SPOT, THE MAN LYING ON THE SAND REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS . . .



SEEING THE VAGUE
SHAPES HASTENING
TOWARDS HIM,
CARROL YELLED
IN TERROR . . .



THEY'RE
COMING FOR ME!
THEY WON'T MAKE
ME FIGHT...
I MUST GET
AWAY...

MIKE CARROL'S CONFUSED MIND SUDDENLY FLASHED BACK TO THAT GLARING PATCH OF WHITE CANVAS IN BERLIN. ONCE AGAIN HE COULD FEEL SWARTZ'S PUNCHES RAINING DOWN ON HIM



THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT WAS A QUICK THINKER. THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING HE COULD DO TO STOP THE CRAZED MAN!



THE FALL STUNNED MIKE CARROL. A STRETCHER PARTY BORE THE EX-FIGHTER BACK TO THEIR OWN LINES . . .

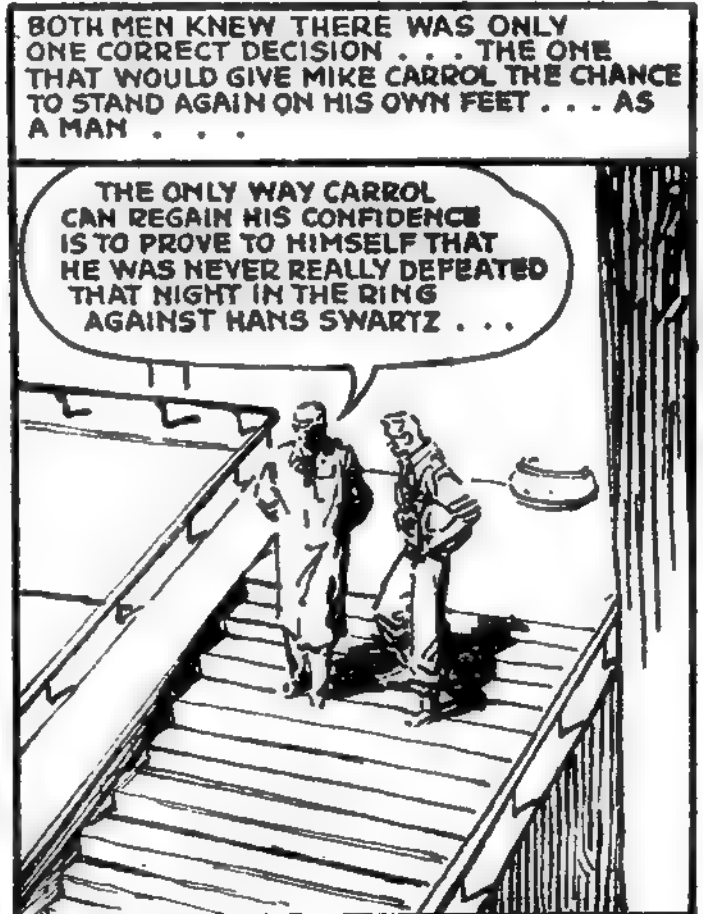


IT WAS SOME WEEKS BEFORE CARROL WAS OUT OF HOSPITAL. BY THAT TIME, BURCH HAD HAD THE CHANCE TO THINK THINGS OVER . . .

THE ARMY
WILL NEVER MAKE
MIKE CARROL INTO
A MAN. THAT FIGHT
AGAINST SWARTZ SEEMS
TO HAVE TAKEN ALL
THE COURAGE OUT
OF HIM . . .



BURCH FELT A DOUBLE BURDEN OF GUILT. HE HAD MATCHED CARROL AGAINST A MAN VASTLY SUPERIOR IN EXPERIENCE AND RINGCRAFT. NOW HE HAD SENT THE SAME MAN INTO BATTLE AGAINST OVERWHELMING ODDS



CHECKING ON NEW ARRIVALS ONE MORNING, CAPTAIN BURCH FOUND THE PROBLEM WAS BACK IN HIS COMPANY AGAIN . . .

REPLACEMENTS TO
BRING UP COMPANY
STRENGTH, CAPTAIN...
AND HOSPITAL DISCHARGE
CASES...

... CARROL
AGAIN... THIS
TIME I'VE GOT
TO HELP HIM
LICK HIS
FEAR...



THE COMPANY WAS SOON IN ACTION AGAIN, TAKING A BATTERING FROM HEAVY ENEMY SHELLING . . .

WE MUST MAKE SURE
THE JERRIES DON'T BREAK
THROUGH OUR FORWARD
POSITIONS.



IN THE FRONT LINE TRENCHES, THE SERGEANT IN CHARGE OF MIKE CARROL'S PLATOON CONFIDED HIS MISGIVINGS TO BURCH.



BURCH TURNED, AND PICKED UP A TOMMY-GUN



BURCH'S THOUGHTS WERE ON MIKE CARROL AS HE SELECTED HIS MEN FOR THE PATROL. THIS MIGHT BE THE RIGHT OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE THE YOUNG BOXER FACE UP TO REALITY AND REGAIN HIS LOST FIGHTING SPIRIT



AS DUSK FELL, THE PATROL MOVED LIKE SHADOWS FROM THE BRITISH LINES INTO NO MAN'S LAND



THE SILENCE SEEMED TO HANG IN THE AIR, GRIM AND HEAVY, NOW THE ENEMY GUNS HAD CEASED FIRING. SUDDENLY THE WATCHFUL GERMAN SPOTTERS FIRED A FLARE. MIKE CARROL'S SLOW REACTION LEFT HIM FROZEN IN THE HARSH WHITE LIGHT!



THE HALF-CROUCHING FIGURE OF CARROL HAD GIVEN THE PATROL AWAY. A WAITING GERMAN MORTAR CREW SPRANG INTO ACTION!



WITH PIN-POINT ACCURACY, THE GERMAN CREW LOBBED A BOMB RIGHT INTO THE CENTRE OF THE SMALL KNOT OF BRITISH TROOPS. A GOUT OF ORANGE FLAME AND A RENDING BLAST-WAVE SENT BURCH STAGGERING



BURCH FOUND HIMSELF STARING INTO THE WILD TERROR OF MIKE CARROL'S FACE!



WITH A MAD, UNREASONING FURY, THE TRAPPED MAN TURNED ON CAPTAIN BURCH



MIKE CARROL FLUNG THE SMALLER MAN ASIDE. IN HIS BLIND FEAR, HE WAS CLIMBING FROM COVER, WHEN THE MORTAR BARRAGE STOPPED AND A FIGURE LOOMED UP BEFORE HIM!



BURCH FIRED ONCE. THE GERMAN INFANTRYMAN SLUMPED TO THE GROUND . . .



THINGS HAD HAPPENED TOO FAST FOR CARROL'S SPINNING BRAIN. HE COLLAPSED AND FELL BACK UNCONSCIOUS. BURCH CROUCHED IN THE SHELL-HOLE AS THE SOUND OF FIRING GREW LOUDER



AT DAWN A PROBING SPEARHEAD FROM THE BRITISH LINES FOUND THE TWO SURVIVORS



BACK IN THEIR OWN LINES, BURCH LIED AGAIN, IN CARROL'S FAVOUR!

I MUST HAVE BLACKED
OUT AFTER THE MORTAR ATTACK,
... IF CARROL HADN'T TAKEN
MY PISTOL THAT ENEMY SOLDIER
WOULD HAVE KILLED US BOTH.
CARROL PROVED HIMSELF
A FIRST-CLASS SOLDIER!



AS HE WALKED AWAY, BURCH FELT THEIR EYES BORING INTO HIS BACK. HE HAD
DELIBERATELY CAST DOUBTS ON HIS OWN CAPACITY AS A SOLDIER ... FOR CARROL'S
SAKE

I MUST HAVE MADE
A MISTAKE ABOUT CARROL.
HE SHOWED MORE SPIRIT
THAN THE CAPTAIN!

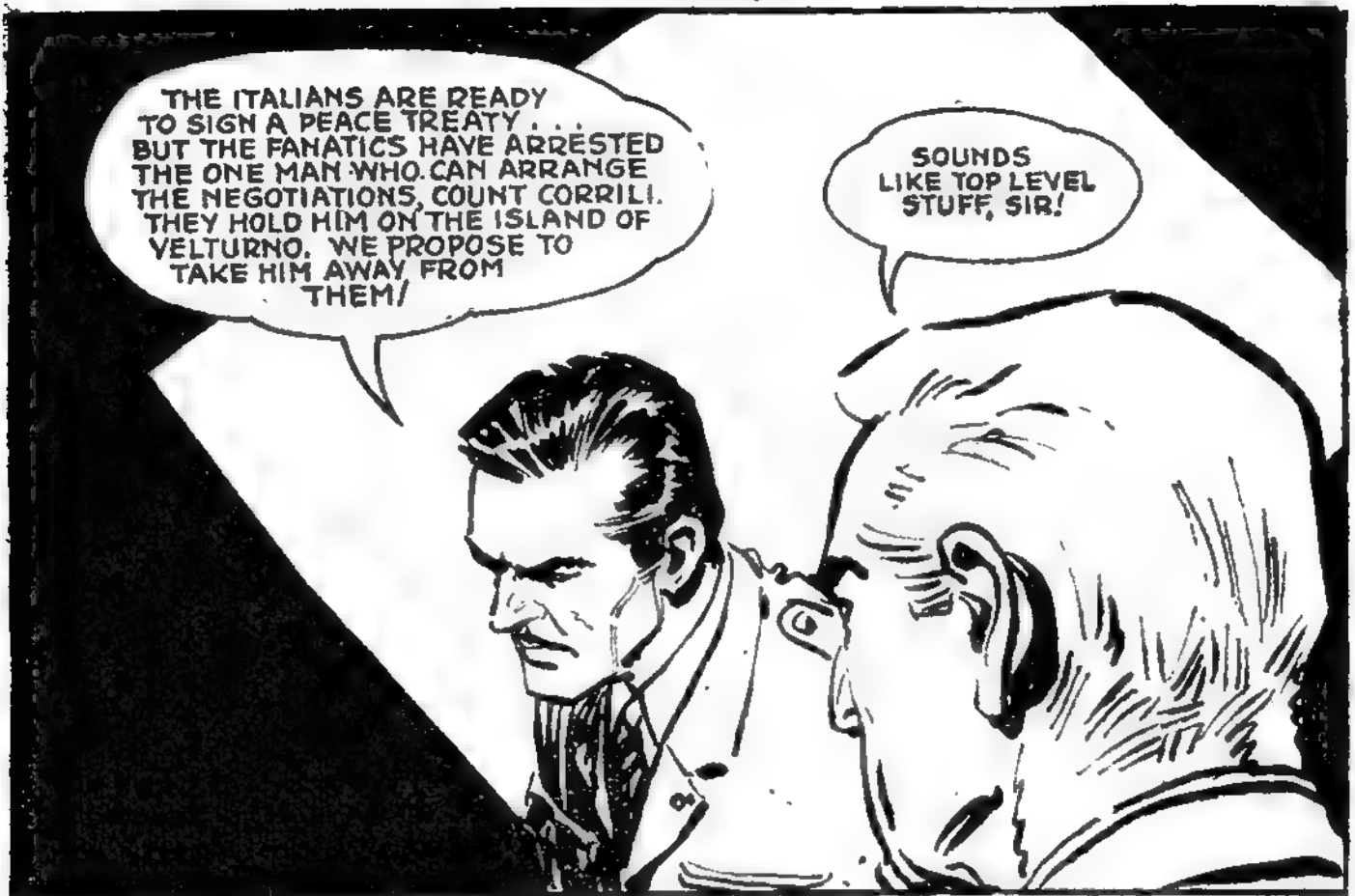
IS BURCH CRACKING UP?
HE ADMITS HE LOST THAT PATROL
... MAYBE HE'S GETTING TOO
OLD FOR COMMAND ...



Chapter 3. *The Reckoning*

THE STORY OF THE LOSS OF THE PATROL TRAVELLED FAST. BUT THERE WAS ONE MAN WHO HAD NO DOUBTS ABOUT BURCH'S ABILITIES AS A LEADER







BURCH WAS DEEP IN THOUGHT AS HE LEFT THE COLONEL'S OFFICE.



AS A RESULT OF BURCH'S GLOWING REPORTS OF MIKE'S COURAGE AND INITIATIVE, THE EX-FIGHTER HAD COME TO BE HELD IN NEW RESPECT BY HIS COMRADES. THERE WAS A CONFIDENT QUALITY ABOUT CARROL NOW



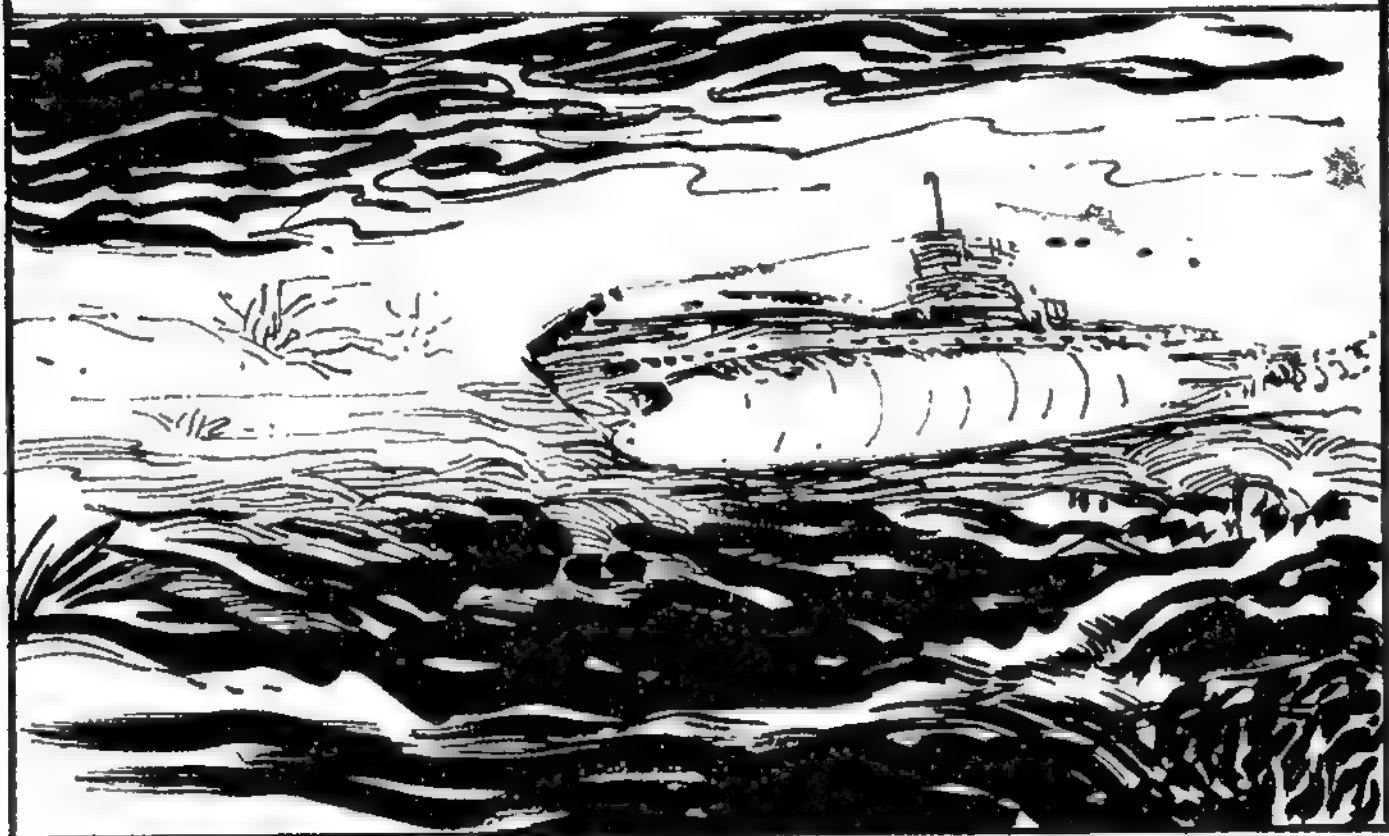
SHREWDLY, BURCH REALISED THAT CARROL VALUED THIS NEW-FOUND RESPECT . . .



BUT DESPITE HIS BLUSTER, MIKE CARROL KNEW THE TRUTH ALREADY . . . THAT WITHOUT BURCH TO LEAN ON, HE WAS FINISHED, BOTH AS A SOLDIER AND A MAN! A WEEK LATER



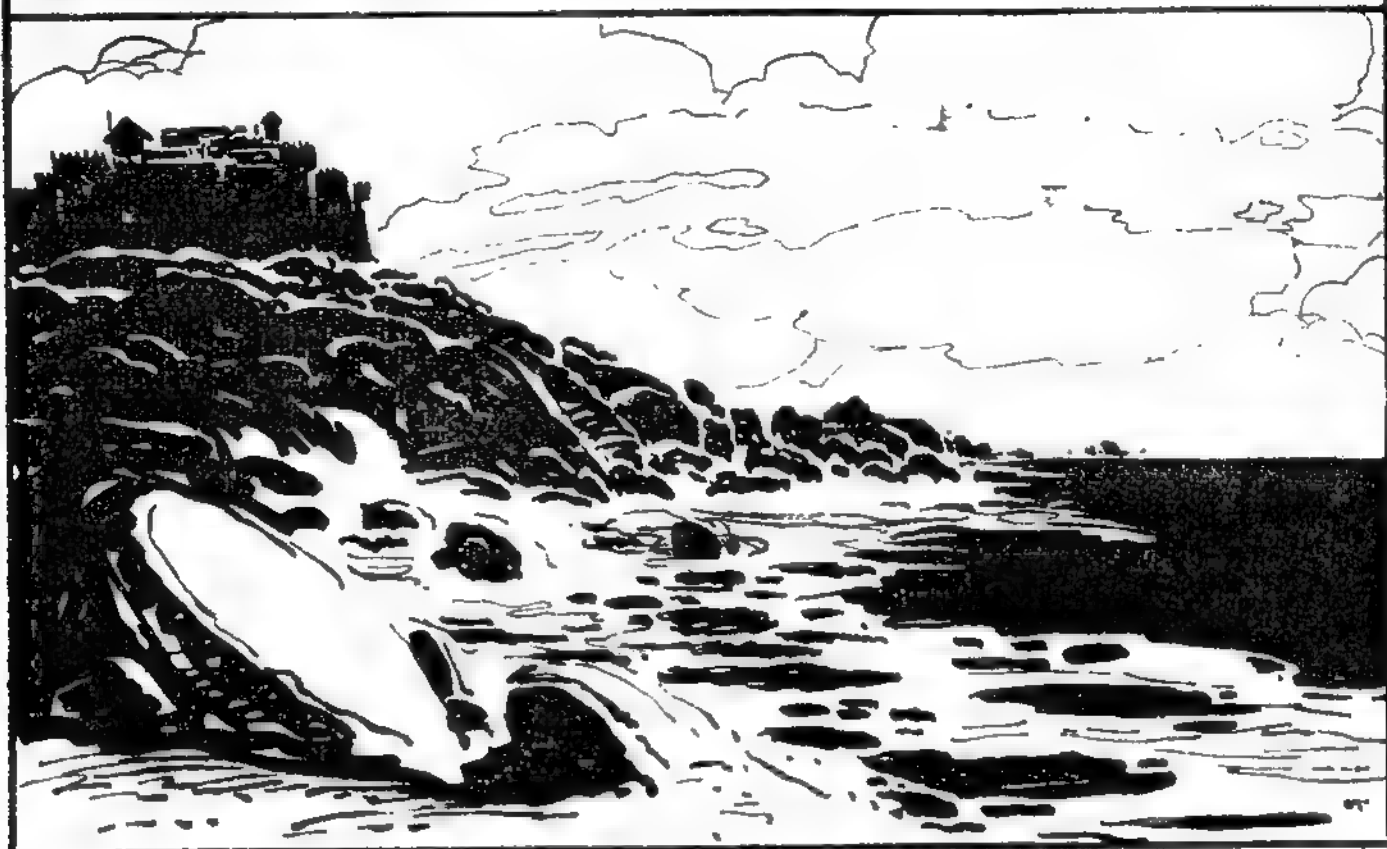
THAT NIGHT, A BRITISH SUBMARINE, WITH BURCH'S PARTY ON BOARD, SLIPPED HER MOORINGS AND HEADED TOWARDS THE ENEMY-HELD ISLAND. . .



AS HE TALKED OVER THE FINAL DETAILS OF THE ASSAULT WITH THE OTHER OFFICERS, CAPTAIN BURCH WAS CONSCIOUS OF THE HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY THAT HAD BEEN THRUST UPON HIM . . .



THE CASTLE CHIA MARINA SAT HIGH ABOVE RUGGED CRAGS ON THE SMALL ISLAND OF VELTURNO



AT THAT MOMENT, A NEWLY-ARRIVED COMMANDANT WAS MAKING SURE HIS TOUGH PARATROOP GUARDS WERE ON THE ALERT

I WANT A DOUBLE GUARD POSTED!
LET US SHOW THESE ITALIAN FOOLS
HOW REAL SOLDIERS TURN TO!

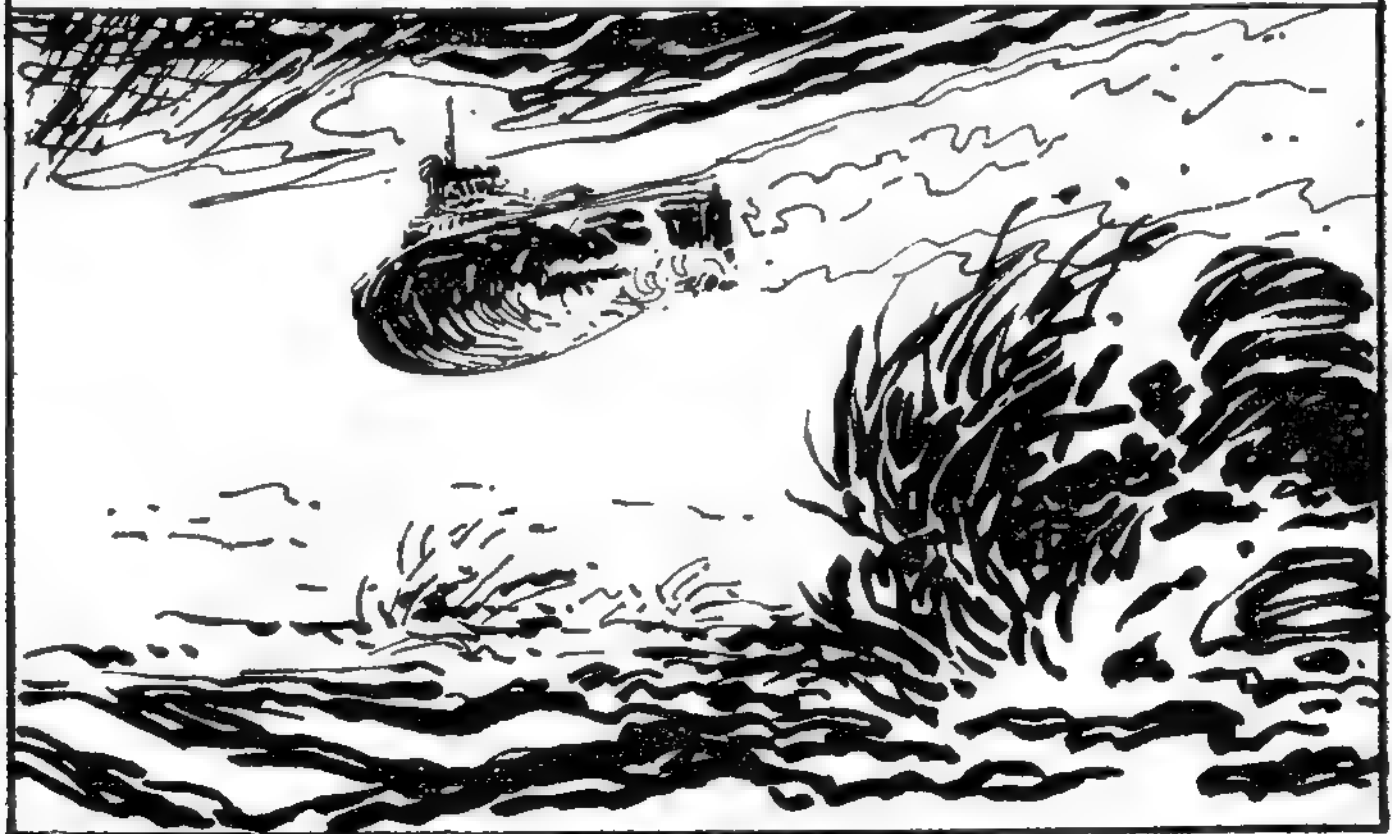
JAWOHL,
HERR MAJOR ...



UNDER SWARTZ'S COMMAND THE ISLAND BECAME A BRISTLING NETWORK OF LOADED GUNS AND WATCHING EYES



IT WAS INTO THIS DEADLY VIPER'S NEST THAT THE BRITISH SUBMARINE CREPT, HUGGING THE SEA BED UNTIL SHE WAS CLOSE INSHORE.



THE NIGHT WAS BLACK WHEN SHE SURFACED AND THE RAIDERS MOVED TOWARDS THE SHORE IN RUBBER DINGHIES. BURCH HAD HIS FIRST STIRRINGS OF DOUBT.

THIS'LL BE A TOUGH NUT TO CRACK. A SMALL FORCE COULD HOLD THIS PLACE AGAINST ALL COMERS. THOSE CRAGS WOULD MAKE GOOD COVER FOR MACHINE-GUN NESTS . . .



. . . THE UNIT MADE A LANDING ON A SPUR OF ROCK, WELL HIDDEN BY THE OVERHANGING CRAGS . . .

SO FAR,
SO GOOD, SIR.
WHAT NOW?

WE'LL SPLIT INTO TWO
GROUPS, LIEUTENANT. YOU
TAKE ONE PARTY UP THE
OTHER SIDE . . .



BURCH MADE SURE CARROL WAS WITH HIS OWN GROUP, AS THEY COMMENCED TO CLIMB



EDGING ROUND A SPUR OF ROCK, BURCH SPOTTED THE FIRST OF THE NAZI MACHINE-GUN NESTS!



THAT'S GOT
TO BE KNOCKED OUT
... WITHOUT TOO
MUCH NOISE ...

HE ACTED QUICKLY. HAND SIGNALS BROUGHT THE REST OF HIS GROUP WITHIN STRIKING RANGE OF THE UNSUSPECTING GERMANS. THEN THEY STRUCK...



CAPTAIN BURCH NOTICED THE PALE, SET FACE OF MIKE CARROL . . .



CARROL'S FEELING
THE TENSION . . . I'VE
GOT TO KEEP AN EYE
ON HIM . . .

... THIS SILENCE! ...
IT'S UNEARTHLY ... I WON'T
BE ABLE TO STAND IT MUCH
LONGER . . .

BURCH'S ATTACK FORCE CLIMBED STILL HIGHER. BUT HE KNEW THEY COULD NOT HOPE TO ESCAPE DETECTION FOR MUCH LONGER



... THIS TIME IT WAS BURCH WHO SILENCED THE SENTRY ...



BURCH TURNED, FORGETTING CARROL WAS RIGHT BEHIND HIM. HIS NERVES ALREADY STRAINED TO BREAKING POINT, CARROL REACTED DRAMATICALLY AT THE SIGHT OF THE GERMAN SENTRY!





AS CARROL HALF-FELL, HALF-RAN INTO AN OPEN SPACE BETWEEN TWO ROCKS, AN ENEMY GUNNER SPOTTED HIM



BURCH FLUNG HIMSELF AT THE YOUNG BOXER AND PUSHED HIM INTO COVER. CHIPS OF ROCK, SHATTERED BY SPANDAU BULLETS, FLEW ON ALL SIDES . . .



CARROL SUDDENLY RELAXED. IN A STATE OF EXHAUSTED FRIGHT, HE LAY THERE IN THE COVER OF THE ROCK . . .





BURCH SPOKE THE TRUTH, FOR, AT THAT MOMENT, MAJOR SWARTZ HAD RECEIVED INFORMATION OF THE BRITISH LANDING . . .





AT SWARTZ'S INSTRUCTIONS, THE ELITE NAZI PARATROOPS PREPARED TO FORCE THE BRITISH FROM THE ROCK FISSURES WHERE THEY HAD TAKEN COVER...



A HANDFUL OF ITALIANS HAD REMAINED BEHIND TO HELP WITH GARRISON DUTIES. NOW THEY WERE TO BE LEFT TO GUARD THE FORTRESS . . .



MEANWHILE BURCH STILL CROUCHED IN COVER WITH CARROL . . . AS HE HAD BEEN TALKING, A STRANGE LOOK HAD COME OVER THE BIG MAN'S FACE . . .





COOLLY, MIKE FORCED HIS WAY UP THE CRAGS. THE FIRST NAZI WHO BLOCKED THE PATH FELL BEFORE HE COULD LEVEL HIS RIFLE



FARTHER ON, MIKE'S SUB MACHINE-GUN HOSED THE GERMANS MANNING A MACHINE-GUN...



THE TURN OF EVENTS HAD TRANSFORMED MIKE INTO A ONE MAN ARMY. HE WALKED INTO THE FACE OF ALL THAT THE GERMANS THREW AT HIM. HIS SHEER BRAVADO FORCED THEM TO GIVE GROUND . . .



JERRY BURCH WAS CLOSE BEHIND MIKE. THE MOST PERILOUS PART OF THEIR MISSION STILL LAY AHEAD . . .



BURCH LIFTED A HAND TO STOP THE YOUNG EX-BOXER . . .



MIKE CARROL HEADED OFF. JERRY BURCH PICKED UP HIS GUN AND FOLLOWED, HIS FACE SET AND GRIM



BURCH KNEW THE ODDS WERE HEAVILY STACKED AGAINST THEM, BUT THEIR SHEER DARING REDUCED THOSE ODDS. THEY STORMED THE NEXT NAZI MACHINE-GUN POST BEFORE THE CREW HAD TIME TO SPOT THEM.



A GRENADE BLEW THE NEXT STRONGPOINT INTO SCRAP. . . .



A FORMIDABLE FIGHTING TEAM, THE YOUNG BOXER AND HIS FORMER MANAGER, LEAPED INTO THE MIDST OF THE STARTLED GERMANS IN THE NEXT MACHINE-GUN NEST



BUT, AT LAST, THEY WERE BROUGHT TO A DEAD STOP, PINNED DOWN BY DEADLY, CONCENTRATED FIRE FROM A CONCRETE BLOCKHOUSE!





WITHOUT SAYING ANOTHER WORD, JERRY BURCH LEAPT FROM BEHIND THE ROCKS AND CHARGED FRANTICALLY TOWARDS THE PILL-BOX.



HORRIFIED, MIKE CARROL WATCHED BURCH HURL HIMSELF AT THE STRONGPOINT AT POINT BLANK RANGE. THERE WAS A FLASH, AS THE CAPTAIN FLUNG A GRENADE!



WHEN THE REST OF THE UNIT ARRIVED, MIKE WAS STANDING BLANK-FACED, THE LIMP BODY OF JERRY BURCH IN HIS ARMS



AS BURCH AND CARROL HAD DRAWN THE ENEMY FIRE WITH THEIR RUSH TACTICS, THE LIEUTENANT'S PARTY HAD MET LITTLE OPPOSITION. AT THE FORTRESS, THE DEMORALISED ITALIANS SURRENDERED WITHOUT A FIGHT.



BUT THE RESIDUE OF GERMAN TROOPS LEFT IN THE FORTRESS WERE MADE OF STERNER STUFF. MAJOR HANS SWARTZ WATCHED AS THE BATTLE SWAYED ACROSS THE COURTYARD



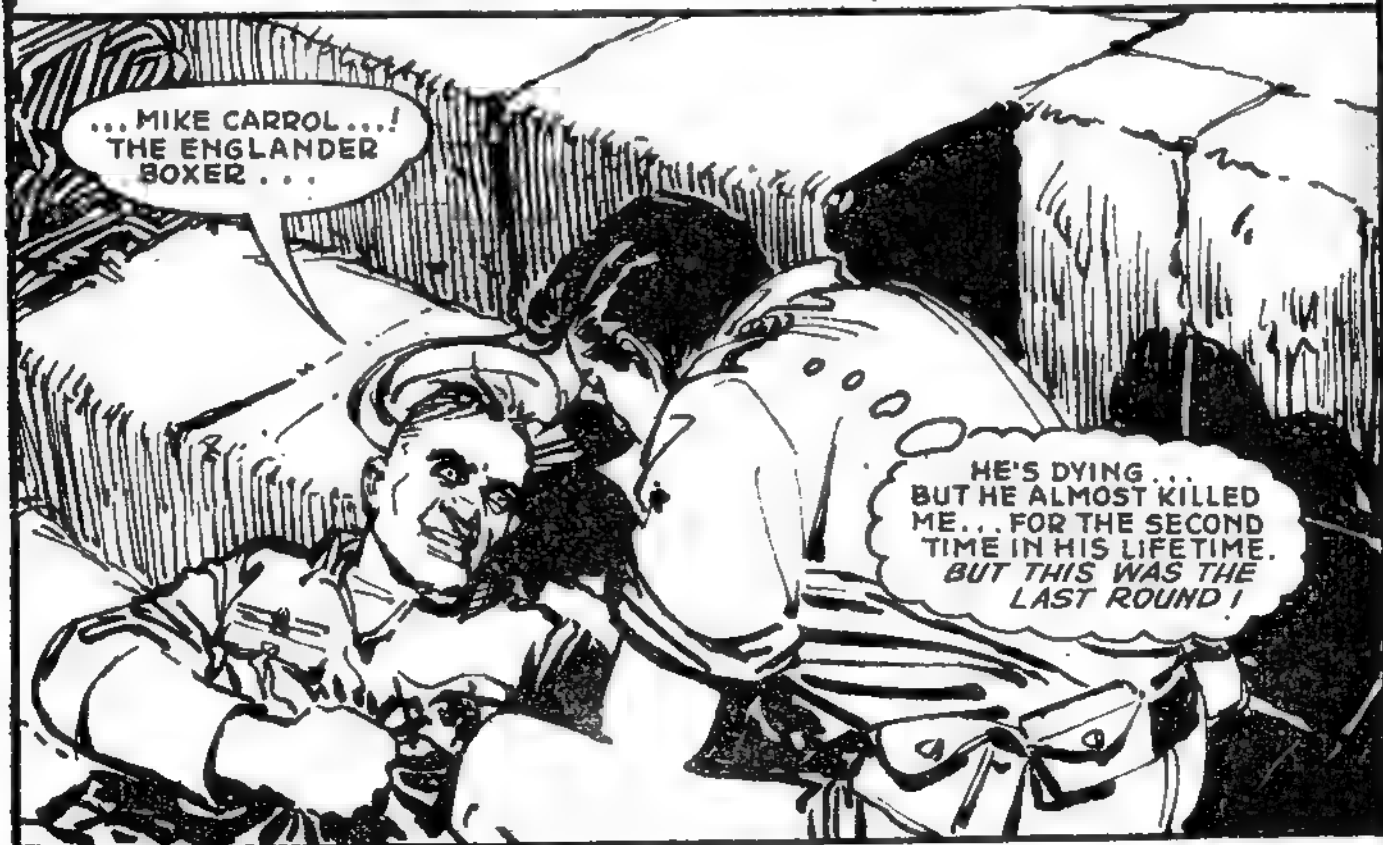
A BURST OF FIRE KILLED THE OFFICER AT HIS SIDE AS SWARTZ RAN FOR THE STEPS. MIKE CARROL SHOUTED AS SWARTZ WHEELED



SWARTZ'S LUGER WAS RAISED, HIS FINGER WAS SQUEEZING THE TRIGGER AS A BURST FROM MIKE'S GUN HAMMERED HIM TO THE GROUND.



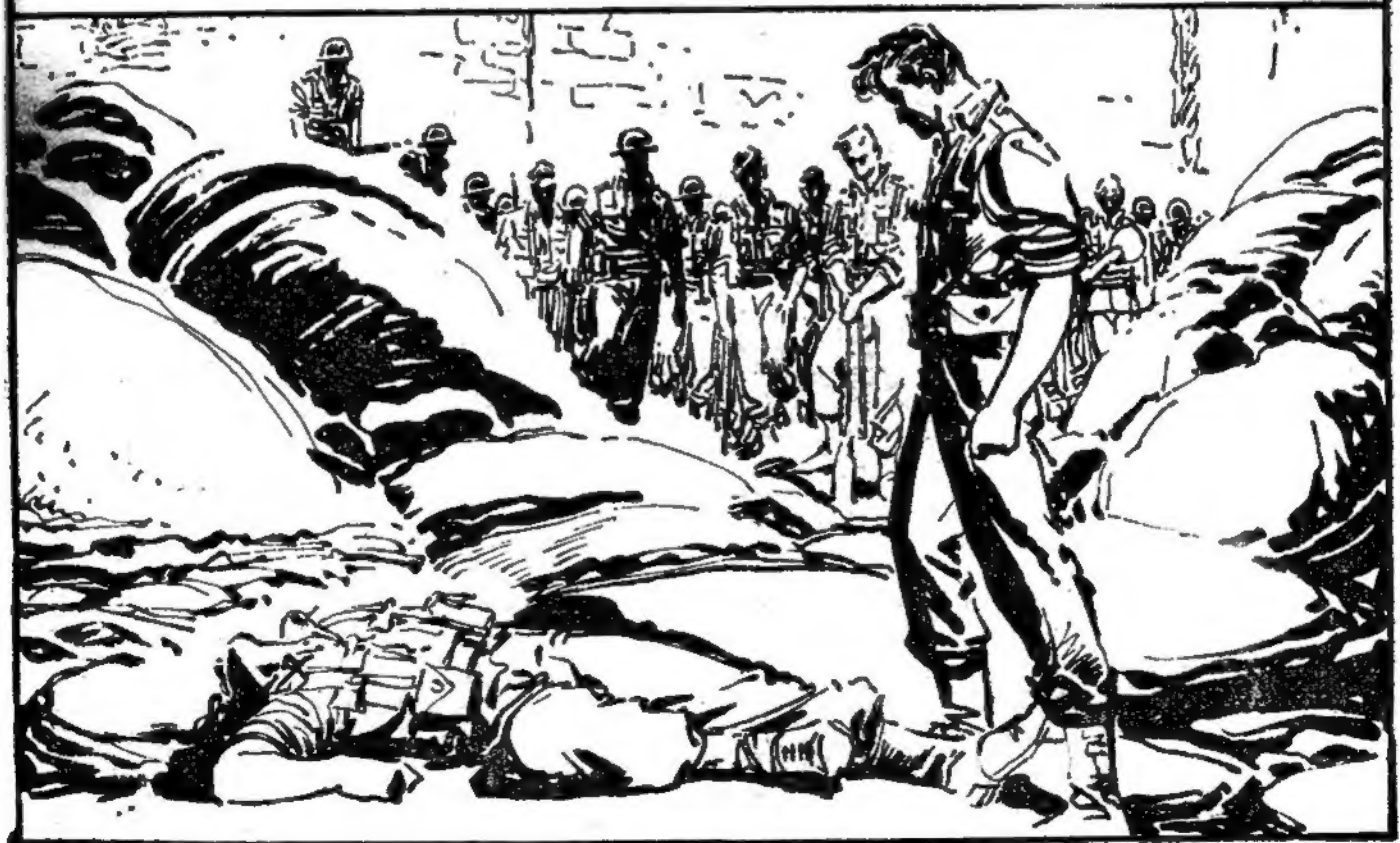
AND IT WAS AS HE LAY ON THE STONE STEPS, STARING UP AT HIS CONQUEROR,, THAT HE RECOGNISED HIM



AS THE BRITISH TROOPS TOOK THE RESCUED COUNT CORI-LI TO THE BEACH, MIKE WALKED AWAY FROM THE DEAD GERMAN



JERRY BURCH'S BODY LAY NEAR THE RAMPARTS OF THE CASTLE. HE HAD PAID HIS DEBT . . . AND HE HAD PAID IT WILLINGLY



TWO MEN FROM MIKE'S PAST HAD DIED THAT NIGHT . . . ONE OF THEM IN ORDER TO HELP MIKE CARROL OVERCOME THAT PAST. BUT AT LAST, MIKE CARROL HAD CONQUERED HIS FEARS . . . **ONCE AGAIN, HE WAS A FIGHTER** . . .



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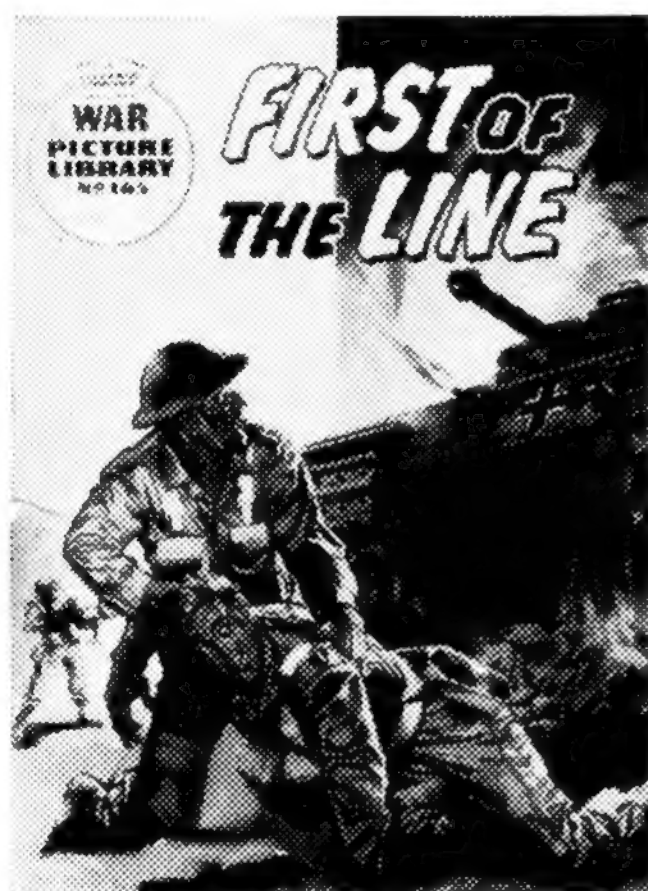
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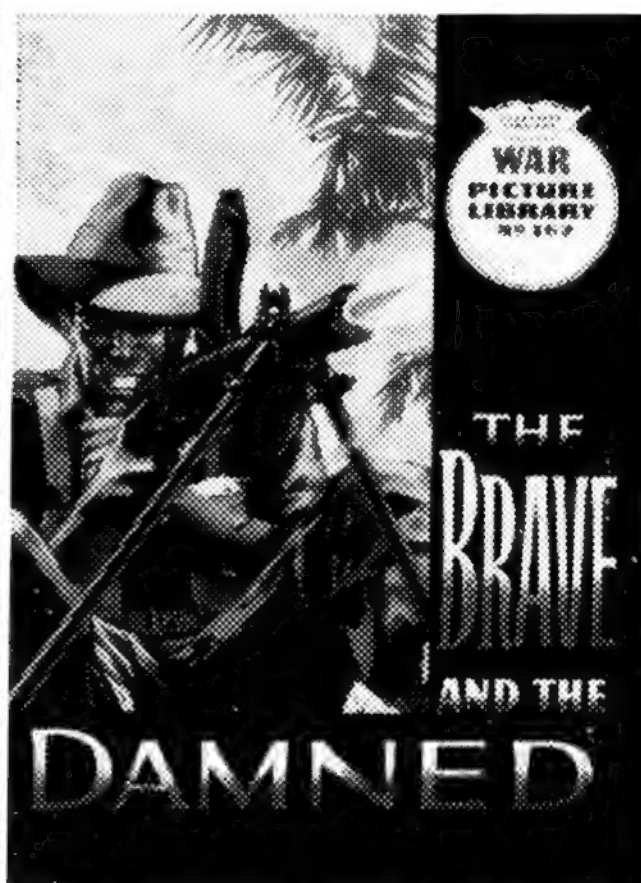
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